30 October - 1 November 1987

The ROYAL ANGUS HOTEL, Birmingham

NOVACON 12

The Annual Convention of the Birmingham Science Fiction Group

GUEST OF HONOUR IAIN BANKS

A SCENE FROM "WALKING ON GLASS"

PROGRESS REPORT

NUMBER ONE

CHAIRMAN'S BIT

First, an apology. I have been told many of you at Novacon 16 were not aware that I was taking memberships as I had not set up a proper desk. I am further told that many of you were asking to register after I had gone home. I apologise for this state of affairs, and we have decided to keep the £8.00 membership open until the end of Eastercon. The rates will be increased after that, see "Important Information"

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Now we come to the more usual chairman's bit. This is where I say how crazy I must be etc etc. I'm not going to say all that. It's all been said before, and anyway it isn't true. I had a great time chairing Fifteencon, and, so far, I'm enjoying Novacon 17. If that means I really am crazy then so be it, but I don't think so.

What I do have in common with all the chairmen who have gone before is the "blank piece of paper in front of me". It may be a cliche but that doesn't make it any less true. I have to fill this, and other, empty sheets in such a way as to both inform and entertain you. I hope I shall succeed.

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Below is the first piece of information you need. Please take careful note, WE REALLY DO MEAN IT

IMPORTANT NOTICE

MEMBERSHIPS WILL BE LIMITED TO 350

JOIN EARLY TO AVOID DISAPPOINTMENT

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We did not take this step without much thought, but the reasons for it will become clear as you read on.

We must stress, however, that we really do mean it, so if anyone out there regularly has a membership number higher than 350 do please remember, YOU HAVE BEEN WARNED

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FROM THE RETIRING CHAIRMAN

By Tony Berry

O.K. so I was wrong, which just goes to verify the rules for being a convention Chairman: Never work with children or animals, and be careful of making predictions in print. In the Programme Book of Novacon 16 I said that the con would probably never go back to the Angus. Ho Ho!! (what a prat). But at the time it really looked that way, honest. Now, however, things have changed, and Bernie will tell you why she thinks it can go back there. I hope it all works out - let's face it, you were never really happy about moving away from the place were you? So best of luck to her and the committee.

Right, that's the grovelling and excuses over, so I'll just mention a couple of other things. Firstly, if you missed it at the time, we made about £150 from the book auction and raffle. We had intended to pay for another S.F. Talking Book with the proceeds, but as the amount is insufficient we decided to hold it over until this year. Secondly, will the guy who offered £20 for the box of assorted fanzines please contact the committee as I've still got them!

Lastly, remember the Dire Warnings about misbehaving at the con? I took a lot of stick for that, but it had the desired effect. There were no problems at all during the weekend, and the management thought we were wonderful. Some of them even smiled occasionally. Thanks to all.

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THE COMMITTEE

The committee, as tends to be the case, consists of a mixture of old hands and new enthusiasts, and is:

Chairman	Bernie Evans
Treasurer	Graham Poole
Memberships/Hotel Bookings	Mick Evans
Programme/Films	Geoff Williams & Stephen Rogers
Advertising	Rog Peyton

In addition to the actual committee there are several "Operations" people who will be helping the smooth running of the convention. so far the following have agreed to help:

Book-room	Pauline Morgan
Art Show	David A Hardy
Creche	Carol Morton
Programme Book Editor	Alan Cash

We are very grateful to these people, but need more. We need a Chief Gopher, and someone to look after the Technicalities such as P.A. system and film projector. Will volunteers please contact Bernie as soon as possible.

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THE CONVENTION

I decided, due to various comments I've been hearing over the last few years, to try to take Novacon back to its roots. There was an immediate problem, I wasn't around at the time, so I've been reading old programme books I've managed to aquire, and also listened to the people who came up to me after Fifteencon and said "That's the best Novacon I've been to lately", and came up with the ideas below, under the headings "The Hotel" and "The Programme" I hope you like them.

Novacon 17 will be run by fans, for fans, but will be run professionally with no hitches (she said, hopefully)

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THE HOTEL

After taking note of what many people said during Novacon 16, and in particular what was said at the "Future of Novacon" meeting on the Sunday afternoon, we decided to take Novacon back to the Royal Angus in Birmingham.

The Angus, as those of you who attended Fifteencon will know, has had extensive refurbishment. Our usual function room, the Wroxton, is now open again, and the main bar has been extended to twice its original size. So, despite comments by Tony in the Novacon 16 programme Book it is still feasible to hold a Novacon at the Angus. We still have the problem of numbers, to a lesser degree than we had thought, but a problem all the same. We have decided to take the unpopular step of LIMITING NUMBERS. The limit isn't as stringent as we first thought, but to those who always join late, or always "walk in" we must give the advice JOIN EARLY. Memberships will be accepted on a FIRST COME-FIRST SERVED basis.The limit decided upon is 350.

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MORE DIRE WARNINGS

It is not my intention to reiterate chapter and verse the dire warnings given at previous conventions. It will be sufficient to say that the warnings which were published at Mexicon 2, Fifteencon, and the particularly strongly worded one at Novacon 16, whilst they may have been unpopular, did the trick. If you all follow the same standards of behaviour at Novacon 17 the Hotel Management and the Committee will be more than pleased. For new Convention goers the gist of it is, very briefly, do not vandalise anything in any part of the hotel, remember that the hotel is selling food, drink, and beds, so do not bring your own, or at least be discreet. In the case of drink the hotel is entitled to charge corkage, VERY EXPENSIVE , in the case of food and beds they are entitled to throw you out. In the event of any trouble with the hotel regarding any of the above the committee will not stand by you.

(I hate this bit, but it is very neccessary- have a good time)

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FOOD AND DRINK

The hotel restaurant will be open in the usual way for those who enjoy, and can afford to pay for, the excellent cuisine provided there. Of course you can't eat there all the time, (can you), so there will also be the usual convention food provided cheaply, and almost continuously. The details have not yet been finalised with the hotel, but we can promise both hot & cold snacks, and also a reasonable vegetarian choice. To avoid previous problems with poor choice for vegetarians, The question has been included on your convention booking form in addition to the hotel booking form. This will ensure that the catering staff will be made aware that the question relates to ALL attendees, not just hotel residents.

There will be three bars open. The main bar, which will be a REAL ALE bar, the small bar at the back of the Wroxton which will be closed during programme items so that those who want to attend can do so in peace and quiet, and a portable bar in the Ariel, see "Fan Room".

Breakfast will be served each morning from 7.30 to 10.00. On Saturday and Sunday you will need your breakfast tickets. Any-one staying in the hotel on Thursday, Sunday & Monday will of course have the following morning's breakfast included in the price of the room, but breakfast tickets will not be issued for those days.

Breakfast tickets will be issued on your arrival, which can be exchanged in the food bar, but not the restaurant, for the convenience of those who do not eat breakfast. Each ticket will only be valid on the day for which it is issued, so you can't save Saturday's to add to Sunday's, nor can you use them on a previous day.

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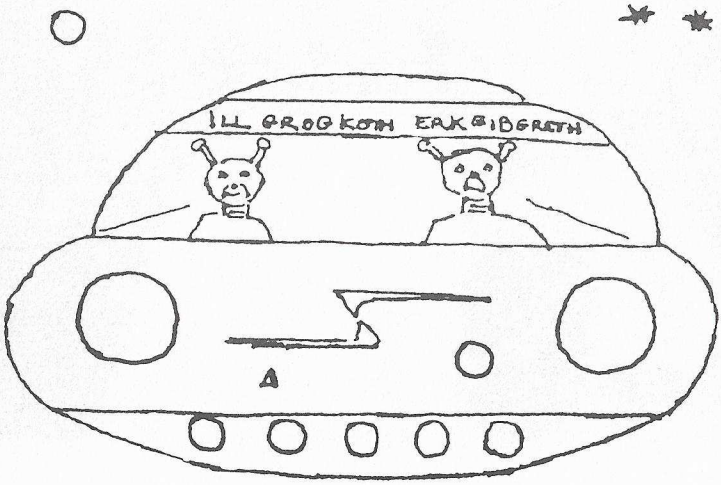

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GUEST OF HONOUR

Our Guest of Honour is the inimitable Iain Banks, a relative new-comer to Fandom. His first convention was Mexicon 2, and his second was Fifteencon. As both these were at the Angus it seems very fitting that his first Guest of Honourship is also at the Angus.

Iain is one of the rising stars in the literary firmament, and, although he does not profess to be a writer of S.F., his work is close enough to qualify him. I am also told his next book is very definitely mainstream S.F., although somehow I can't imagine Iain writing anything that could be considered mainstream, we shall see. All that apart, he's a thoroughly nice guy, and a FAN to boot!

In order to let you know all about Iain we have asked various people to do an in depth character assassination disguised as an informative article, the first of which appears on the next page.

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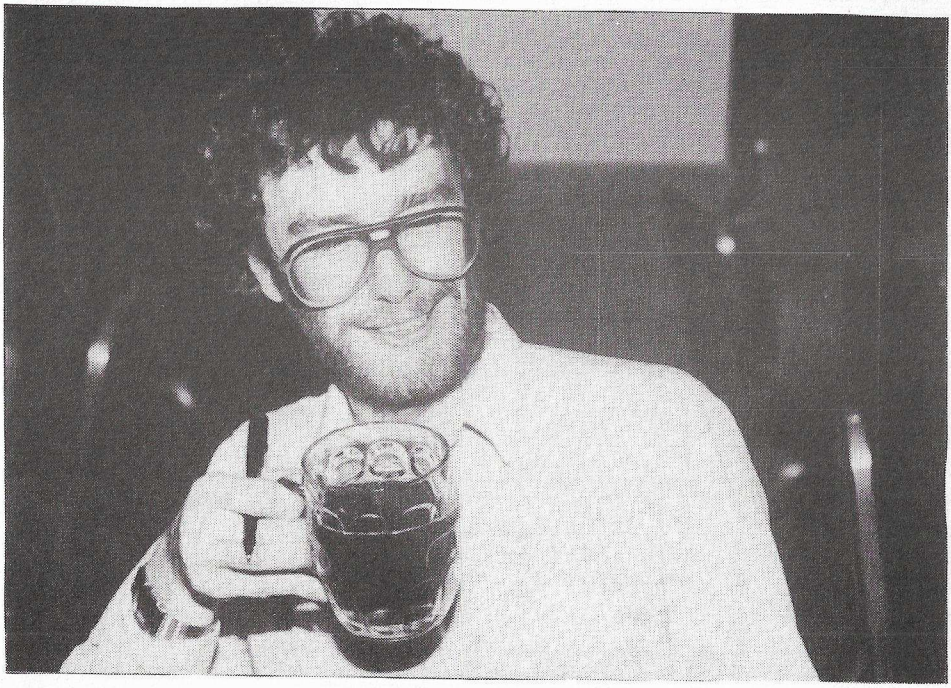

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IAIN BANKS

AN IN-DEPTH THINGY

By SHAUN HUTSON

When I was first asked to write this piece about Iain Banks I was delighted because, in my opinion, he's the best goalkeeper ever to put on an England jersey. And... (Sorry, just remembered, that was Gordon Banks). Actually my first reaction was 'Oh Christ' but, having taken a handful of Doc Martens (they're like Bob Martins only not as easy to swallow), I felt enthused and ready to bring my full critical faculties to bear on a man who has at various times been called 'Iain', 'Banksy' and 'Bonko'. My God, how his works have sent ripples of unease through the literary establishment. I realized that I had obviously been chosen to dissect his literary brilliance because of my very close knowledge of his books.

As you know he began with that incredible work 'The Wasp Factory' which dealt with management-worker relations in a small industrial unit concerned with the assembly of small six-legged creatures in striped jerseys. He followed that up with 'Walking on Glass', the endearing tale of a Pakistani fakir who can't decide whether to give up the old 'bed of nails' trick or go for something new. His latest book, 'The Bridge' is, of course, a fascinating insight into modern architecture and how to get from one side of a river to the other without drowning. As you can see my knowledge of his work is without equal and, if I'd read any of his books more than fifteen times, I'm sure I'd understand them too.

My first meeting with Iain Banks was at approximately 2.00 a.m. at Fifteencon last year. The first thing that struck me about him was his beard. As I playfully tried to pull it off the second thing which struck me was his boot, which connected squarely with my groin. Well, since that first meeting we've sat together on hundreds (well two) of panels together, discussing horror writing which is odd as Iain doesn't consider himsef a horror writer and also odd because, on both occasions the bar was open. However, once nailed in his seat, he proved that he is not only a very erudite and amusing person but also, and I can sat this without any fear of contradiction, that he's Scots. He is without doubt Britain's most talented writer, and I can assure everyone reading this piece that my pronouncement of his staggering talent has absolutely nothing to do with the fiver he gave me just before I wrote it.

Anyway, enough of this sycophantic drivel. Iain Banks is, along with haggis, the Forth Bridge and Kenny Dalglish, one of Scotland's finest exports and, just because in 'The Wasp Factory' there were some scenes which people may have found offensive, well, that's no reason to call for the re-erection of Hadrian's Wall is it?

So, go and read his books, I know I'm going to just as soon as they take these electrodes off my head.

He is a worthy Guest of Honour for Novacon. By the way, Banksy, it's your round.

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THE PROGRAMME

It is far too early to mention any specific events, but to continue my theme of "back to the roots" it has been decided to have ONE PROGRAMME STREAM only, so you won't have to miss an interesting item because of a clash. The films will be part of the main programme for the same reason. As this year's Novacon falls on Halloween weekend we will be having a Halloween/Horror thread running throughout the convention, but not too much, as it is, after all, a Science Fiction event.

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CRECHE

It is intended that there will be a creche, but only if enough people want to use it, and also enough people volunteer to help to run it. The convention booking form enclosed with this P.R. should be used to indicate your need for a creche and/or your offer to help to run it. People who wish to use the creche will be EXPECTED to help, and other volunteers will of course be more than welcome. In the event of insufficient support the facility will be withdrawn.

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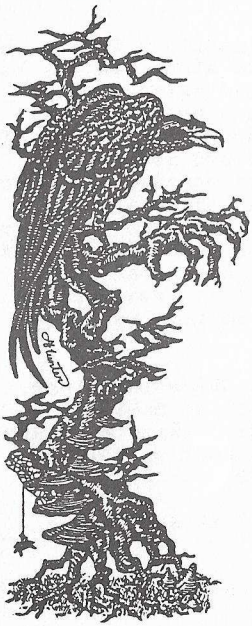

The BRITISH FANTASY Society

The **British Fantasy Society** was formed in 1971 to provide the discerning reader with a greater coverage of the fantasy, SF and horror fields. To achieve this, the society publishes a regular *Newsletter*, packed with information and reviews of the many new books and films that confront the fan, *Dark Horizons*, a magazine that contains fiction and articles, plus several other magazines on subjects designed to interest the Society's membership. Besides magazines, the **BFS** organises an annual **Fantasy Conference** which attracts some of the top names in the field. At these events the **British Fantasy Awards** are presented for categories such as Best Novel and Best Short Story. Amongst those who have enjoyed the benefits of the Society are:

Piers Anthony, Clive Barker, Ken Bulmer, Ramsey Campbell, Stephen Donaldson, Charles L. Grant, Robert Holdstock, Stephen King, Dean R. Koontz, David Langford, Tanith Lee, Fritz Leiber, Brian Lumley, Michael Moorcock, Peter Straub, Peter Tremayne, Lisa Tuttle, Karl Edward Wagner, Manly Wade Wellman, Gene Wolfe...

It costs only £8.00 to subscribe for a year. Send your cheques or postal order to the Society's secretary (*or send an sae for further details*): **Di Wathen, 15 Stanley Road, Morden, Surrey, SM4 5DE, U.K.**

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BOOK AUCTION

Another popular feature is the Book Auction. This is the ideal opportunity for you to find all those obscure/rare items you never have time to search the shops for, (or to get rid of said items if you are fed up with them taking up valuable space).

Of course we can't have an auction if we have no goods, it doesn't have to be books, all S.F. related material can and will be auctioned, even non S.F. items, they usually get the best laugh. So bring along anything you want to, we guarantee our auctioneer can sell it!!

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ART SHOW AND AUCTION

Always a popular feature at Novacon, there will again be a display of artwork, many items of which will be for sale at the mandatory auction. The Art Show will be away from the main convention floor, in the Waverley Suite on the sixth floor, so you can browse at your leisure. Opening times to be advised in a future P.R.

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FAN ROOM

Although there is no Fan Programme the Ariel Suite will be a Fan bar/room/lounge, with tables & display boards available for any-one to use. As this room cannot be a secure room we would ask that you do not leave anything valuable or irreplaceable in there. Neither the convention committee nor the hotel will be responsible for items left in this room.

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BOOK ROOMS

As usual there will be space available for dealers to sell books, magazines, comics etc. As there is not a large secure room at the Angus the rooms on the second floor have been reserved. Although space will obviously be more limited that you are used to at a Novacon I am sure we shall be able to accomodate everyone, as long as no-one is too greedy. In the event of overbooking we shall either reduce the space allowed where more tables than average have been requested, to make room for some of the smaller booksellers, or we shall accept bookings on a "First come - first served" basis, whichever we find to be fairer at the time. There is space on the booking form to reserve your tables.

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THE CONVENTION BOOKING FORM

Included with this P.R. you will find an A4 sized booking form. The purpose of this form is for you to register if you are not already a member, but ALSO it is your opportunity to give us all your needs on one handy form. Please fill in the form, even if you are already registered, particularly if you require Book Room or Art Show space. If you have any queries please contact me on one of the phone numbers given in the "Important Information" section below.

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IMPORTANT INFORMATION

CONTACTS — If you have any queries, suggestions etc please contact either Mick or myself, Bernie Evans, at the address shown below.

ADVERTISING — If you wish to advertise in P.R. 2 or 3, or in the Programme Book please contact Rog Peyton at the address shown below.

Bernie & Mick Evans
7 Grove Avenue
Acocks Green
Birmingham
B27 7UY
Tel 021 707 6606 (Home)
021 373 8131 ext 2630
(Work, Bernie only)

Rog Peyton
19 Eves Croft
Bartley Green
Birmingham
B32 3QL
Tel 021 477 6901

MEMBERSHIP RATES

£ 8.00 until the end of Eastercon
£10.00 until 26/10/87 (last date for postal applications)
£12.00 on the door

HOTEL ROOM RATES

Single	£20.50
Twin	£16.50 per person
Double	£16.50 per person

ADVERTISING RATES	FAN	PROFFESSIONAL
Full Page P.R.	£16	£20
Half Page P.R.	£ 8	£10
Qtr Page P.R.	£ 4	£ 5
Full Page Programme Book	£20	£32
Half Page Programme Book	£10	£16
Qtr Page Programme Book	£ 5	£ 8
Back Page Programme Book (Full page only)	£30	£40

BOOK ROOM RATES — £ 5.00 per table

CRECHE RATES — to be advised

Please use the booking form enclosed for ALL your requirements, except advertising, and please remember to book as early as possible.

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THE NOVA AWARDS

By Martin Tudor

The NOVA is an award for fanzines produced by Science Fiction Fandom in the British Isles, created in 1973 by the late Gillon Field, and presented annually at the Birmingham Science Fiction Group's Novacon. The NOVA was, until 1981, given to the editor of the fanzine voted "Best of the Year". From 1973 to 1976 the NOVA winner was decided by a select panel of judges chosen for their knowledge of fandom.

In 1977, whilst the Novacon committee persuaded the ultra-select NOVA committee that a more democratic system would be more appropriate, an inebriated Stan Eling persuaded an even more inebriated Dave Langford to draw up a set of rules to govern the new democratic system. The result of all this was, in Kev Smith's words, "the three volume presentation set of NOVA award rules with the seven appendices". These rules provide for an Administrator (responsible for printing and distributing the ballot forms) and a committee (who are responsible for assessing the eligibility of votes cast and counting them).

The next major change to the NOVA came in 1981, again by request oof the Novacon committee, when it was decided to extend the NOVA to include two additional categories - "best Fanwriter" and "best Fanartist".

The fundamental idea of the Nova as it's been run since 1977 is that it should be awarded by informed vote. Informed votes come from informed voters, defined as Novacon members who have been active in fanzines sometime in the year or two preceding the relevant Novacon. "Active in fanzines" is a bit harder to define, but for the sake of clarity the NOVA Award Rules state that this meanshaving produced one or more fanzines, or having contributed articles/artwork to two or more fanzines, or having had letters of comment printed in three or more different fanzines. The most important point to remember about these criteria is that they were not designed to be prohibitive. So, even if you are in doubt about your eligibility, vote anyway!

For a fanzine to qualify <u>ONE</u> or more issues must have appeared between 1/10/86 and 30/9/87. For fanwriters and fanartists to qualify a piece of writing or artwork by the person concerned must have been published for the first time between 1/10/86 and 30/9/87, in a fanzine. For the purposes of this award a fanzine shal be defined as an amateur publication which is concerned with science fiction, fantasy, science fiction and fantasy fans, and/or related subjects, and copies of which may be obtained in exchange for other amateur publications or in response to letters of comment.

Perhaps the most vital point to remember from the preceeding paragraph is that this year, for the first time, "ONE-OFF" fanzines are eligible - that is fanzines which have had only one issue published in the year in question. This ammendment to the previous NOVA rules has been made after extensive discussions throughout the bars of Britain (as tradition demands), and after consultation with the current NOVA committee. Any queries about the NOVA Awards should be directed to the current NOVA Administrator - MARTIN TUDOR, whose address is:- 121 CAPE HILL, SMETHWICK, WARLEY, WEST MIDLANDS, B66 4SH.

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NOVA AWARD WINNERS

The winners of the Nova Awards at Novacon 16 were:

Best Fanzine	Owen Whiteoak - Pink Fluffy Bedsocks
Best Fan Writer	Owen Whiteoak
Best Fan Artist	Atom

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THE MEMBERS

1 Iain Banks
2 Ann Blackburn
3 Bernie Evans
4 Graham Poole
5 Mick Evans
6 Geoff Williams
7 Stephen Rogers
8 Rog Peyton
9 Chris Baker
10 Dave Holmes
11 John Perry
12 Chris Jennings
13 Alex Clarke
14 Edmund Jackson
15 Alison Scott
16 Mike Scott
17 Roger Robinson
18 Margaret Austin
19 Anne Looker
20 Alice Kohler
21 Kate Wright
22 Tim Broadribb
23 Tim Illingworth
24 Rob Meades
25 Patrick Lawford
26 James Steel
27 Charles Mawdesley
28 Stan Eling
29 Helen Eling
30 Peter Wareham
31 Gwen Funnell
32 Chris Southern
33 Jenny Southern
34 Dave Packwood
35 Paul Dormer
36 Nigel Robson
37 Patrick Curzon
38 Pauline Morgan
39 Chris Morgan
40 David A Hardy
41 Larry van der Putte
42 Martin Easterbrook
43 Peter Tyres
44 Stephen Davies
45 Adrian Snowdon
46 Dave Ellis
47 John Dowd
48 Brian Ameringen
49 Caroline Mullan
50 Nick Mills
51 Martin Tudor
52 Phil Rogers
53 Doreen Rogers
54 Peter Mabey
55 Norman Shorrock
56 Ina Shorrock
57 Steve Linton
58 David Bell
59 David Elworthy
60 Susan Francis
61 Mrs S.M. Hall
62 Mr B.R. Hall

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